

746 drastically through time, and we shall shortly see that the Chinese Communists are greatly altering the meaning and symbolism of those few which have been allowed to survive.

585 In addition to the annual festivals, the farmer's life of toil may be relieved by ceremonial family events. For a family with resources or the ability to borrow them, a wedding meant a great feast and ample wine; even the poorest families often went heavily into debt to make a marriage ceremony festive. Practical jokes were played on the bridegroom, traditional songs were sung, and the guests, particularly the men, thoroughly enjoyed themselves. The 584 births of male children were often celebrated as 852 were the betrothals, and other milestones of family and individual life. In modern times the 527 government of the Republic of China decreed certain national holidays, but these were little observed by the farm villages.

536 In addition to these occasions for relaxation, 538 intermittent special events added interest and variety to the routine of village life. Itinerant dramatic troupes occasionally performed, and until very recently, the story teller frequently appeared on the village streets to spin out his tales to an impromptu audience. The election 622 of a village headman often involved political maneuvering and a town meeting. Pilgrimages 788 to famous mountains or shrines were often undertaken in the slack agricultural season for religious reasons or purely for relaxation.

844 less of the sex of the baby. The mother's family gave the bearer of the good news a tip of about 100 coppers and sent, by him, a return gift that was usually a basket of eggs.

846 Three days after the birth of a child, friends and relatives came to bring their congratulations. Many brought presents, generally food.
431 Members of the mother's family came and brought special food, such as eggs, wheat flour, or noodles for the mother and special clothes for the baby.

846 Nine days after the birth the father's family prepared a feast for their friends and relatives including the mother's mother, aunts, and other relatives. The guests brought gifts for the baby. Middle class families gave silver presents, bracelets, necklaces marked with the characters for good luck and long life, or silver coins. Workers' families generally gave money, about fifty coppers. This celebration on the ninth day apparently was the Ting Hsien equivalent of the first month celebration that was customary in other parts of China.

During the first month after birth no strangers or pregnant women were allowed to enter the mother's room, as it was believed that their presence would disturb the mother's milk. If a stranger or a pregnant woman should intrude, the danger could be avoided if the intruder immediately exchanged belts with the mother. Certain phrases were also reported to be taboo for the mother, as they were thought to make it difficult for her to nurse her child.

When a baby was one month old its maternal grandmother came to invite the mother and child to visit her family. According to custom the visit should be for one hundred days. On the way to her home the mother usually scattered a handful of grain, usually millet, or coins at each crossroads. This was to purchase the use of the road from the spirits, who, it was thought, must be placated lest they bring misfortune to the mother and child. Cash used to be used but as they gradually disappeared their place was taken by the ten cash coppers. One rich family was reported to have scattered silver dollars at the crossroads. This custom and belief appeared to be gradually losing their hold on the people.

852 When a child returned from this visit to its mother's home it was
302 customary to shave its head.

852 When a child was one year old a tray with a book, a bunch of flowers, a piece of tile, and a small hoe, or a pair of scissors, if the child was a

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girl, were placed before the tablet of the God of Heaven and Earth. After the adults had worshiped the god the child was brought and allowed to choose from the articles on the tray. His choice was supposed to indicate his future. If the book was chosen the child would be a scholar. If the tile was selected he would be a useless man. If his first choice was the hoe he would be a good farmer. The choice of the scissors foretold that a girl would be a good knitter and seamstress. 852 •

Birthday anniversaries ordinarily were given but little recognition, though special foods were often prepared. Eggs and cakes for the boy carried with them the hope that he would continue to grow up in good health; "long-life" noodles for the family dinner expressed the wish for long life. The birthday of the oldest son was generally given more attention than the anniversaries of the other children. 527

When a man was 60 years old and had lived through a full cycle of the Chinese calendar his family generally held a special celebration. Relatives and friends called to offer their congratulations and present gifts, usually congratulatory scrolls. In some families the visitors kowtowed to the man they were congratulating. A special feast was prepared for the family and friends. Wealthy families sometimes engaged bands of musicians and actors to provide entertainment on a stage erected in one of the family courtyards. In some cases the celebration might last three or four days. 886

What celebrations were held after the 60th anniversary would depend on the family. Some might have one every year. Others would pay special attention only to the 70th and 80th anniversaries. Others might celebrate every five years. The celebrations varied so much from family to family and depended so much on the financial situation of the family that no detailed study of them was attempted.

Marriage

Marriages were regularly arranged by the parents, generally through a match-maker. In some cases a marriage might even be arranged by two families before the birth of their children. If the children were of different sex they were engaged, if of the same sex they became sworn brothers or sisters. 584

When a marriage had been tentatively arranged the horoscopes of the boy and girl, the eight characters giving the year, month, day, and hour of their birth, were written out and sent to the fortune-teller for 582 787

Space is too limited to allow going into further details of the question of law and social order.¹⁶ It suffices to say that villagers know very little about law and yet they seldom commit crime. The backbone of the social order of P'ing-chiao-tsun is customary sanction and not laws promulgated by governments. While the family is a very important unit in the process of ordering and control, public opinions in the form of gossips among villagers are too strong for any one to neglect. 626

Sacred Order

The maintenance of a social order in P'ing-chiao-tsun depends upon forces which extend beyond the secular into the sacred. There is no greater disturbance in normal life aside from military attacks than what is called by the social anthropologists the "life crises" such as birth, marriage and death. In addition to these life crises, the uncertainty of agricultural production due to "water and wind" should be also mentioned. Both life crises and agricultural crises may disturb any existing equilibrium in the social structure, and some means must be provided to have it re-established. When all secular means fail man, he has to appeal to the mystic powers in the unseen world. He has to rescue life from death; so he has to depend on religion.¹⁷ 781

The birth of a child is called a happy event. But mortality is high. Parents are busy with other businesses of life and their knowledge of child care is limited. Anxiety over the security of an infant, under such circumstances, is very high indeed. Here, religion comes to the rescue. Many ceremonies of a magico-religious nature are performed in certain intervals such as three days, one hundred days and one year after birth to assure the child's life. When even these magico-religious performances fail, it is the fate of man and not the failure of gods. 844 852 ●

Marriage is also a happy event, but the newcomer may be a trouble-maker, and the union may not be approved by gods and ancestral spirits. Performances of a magico-religious nature are made before, during and after wedding. As mentioned previously, the 585 787

16 A paper on law and social order in P'ing-chiao-tsun is in preparation.

17 Bronislaw Malinowski, "Magic Science and Religion", in *Science Religion and Reality*, edited by Joseph Needham, New York, 1925, pp. 19-84; A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, *The Andaman Islanders, A Study in Social Anthropology*, Cambridge University Press, 1922.